

With The First Nighters

"THE BACHELOR'S BABY."

Any laurels that Francis Wilson may have gained during his successful career as an actor cannot be said to have been freshened by the addition of new verdure won as a playwright if "The Bachelor's Baby" is to be accepted as the bid for popular favor.

As a whole, the play is silly, though at times during the performance the star's scenes with the little child are tenderly beautiful and touching. During these charming moments the play is temporarily redeemed from the inanity which characterizes most of it, though not to such an extent as to save it.

There is originality in the theme upon which the play is constructed—the story of a bachelor whose aversion to children of every kind almost amounts to a passion. The mere mention of a child is the signal for a panicky condition of mind on his part that nearly equals terror, and then through a brother's will he is suddenly made to father a little girl who so changes the nature of this crusty child-hater that he is completely won by the dear little kiddie.

His hatred for children has in the past prevented the girl whom he would marry from accepting him, and in the winning of the man by the child, the love of the girl quickly follows.

While Wilson is droll and beyond question an excellent actor, his comic opera legs usually get the better of him, and whatever chances for comedy he gives the members of his excellent company come in the form of humor that closely approaches horse play; in falling up and down stairs, bumping one another, tripping over chairs and the like; and this is carried to such an extent that in the climax of one of the acts he resorts to an intrusive safety pin which is annoying the child, and after the supposed extraction of the implement of torture, he emerges from behind a curtain holding the child in the air with one arm while flourishing an article of underwear in the other. Subtle humor that! A wonderful climax! Also the worst kind of taste for a playwright and actor of Mr. Wilson's mentality and attainments.

The play is replete with Wilson's exaggerations and eccentricities which would not be out of place in musical comedy or comic opera, and the lines, while now and then contain a sparkle, are full of end-of-the-century slang that should have been relegated to the extreme rear in years past. For instance, one of the big laughs is "the son of a gun," which occurs three times within an interval of ten minutes in one act.

Baby Davis, the child in the production, is a wonder. Most prodigals on the stage are a bore, but Baby Davis is one in a thousand who is not, and in the difficult role of the niece of Tom Brach, her work (if the comparison may be made), equalled that of a star many times her age. Her understanding was truly remarkable, and she thoroughly delighted everyone. The entire company, too, is perfect, though nothing extraordinary was required of any member of it.

The play should not be highly praised or seriously condemned, but while now and then entertaining, it is unworthy of the efforts of those who are acting it, and much consideration from those who see it.

BLANCHE RING.

There is not in "The Yankee Girl" the verve, the dash and color necessary for the setting of a star of the brilliancy of Blanche Ring, and while she is surrounded with lots of good looking people, and is provided with plenty of music well

suited to her talents, there is something lacking in the production, and the effect is that of a long vaudeville act in which Miss Ring is the show, and during her breathing places, while off the stage, there is nothing much to commend it. The company is splendid, the principals and chorus are excellent, but the vehicle is a little too rickety to carry such an organization.

That is not saying that those who saw "The Yankee Girl" were not pleased, for the work of Miss Ring and her people was of a very high order, and the charm of her personality and stage presence is always enough to repay those in front. The music is by Silvio Hein and the book and lyrics by George V. Hobart, and what the book lacks is made up for in the music and lyrics.

There were many recalls for most of the songs, which were splendidly rendered, with the assistance of one of the best looking choruses that New York has ever sent to the jungles. In Juliette Lange, Marguerite Wright, the inimitable Harry Gilfoil and Wm. P. Carleton, Miss Ring has four of the cleverest people in musical comedy. A word, too, must be said for Paul Porter, whose finished artistry in the role of Oyama, the Jap, was particularly noticeable. "The Yankee Girl" is replete with song hits, most of which belong to Miss Ring, though Miss Lange, Miss Wright, Mr. Gilfoil and Mr. Carleton also scored readily. The settings were frowy, but there were so many other attractions that this did not matter particularly.

ORPHEUM

Helena Frederick and her excellent company in Randolph Hartley's adaptation from Offenbach's "The Tales of Hoffmann," have provided a most excellent entertainment at the Orpheum this week for those who appreciate beautiful music, and the only regret for those who heard them was that the entire opera could not be given.

The requirements necessary to properly act and sing the role of Antonia are such that few singers dare attempt it, let alone carry it through successfully; but Miss Frederick's performance is unusually brilliant, both as to voice and acting, and in the presentation she is ably assisted by George Crampton, Arthur Burckly, Ida Ryan and others.

Lester, the ventriloquist—the different ventriloquist—is another strong feature of the bill, and though using only one figure, so far excels most of the people in the business as to make him always a feature in a vaudeville bill.

Redford and Winchester are perfect jugglers and their comedy never fails to bring down the house. Mignonette Kokin's impersonations are clever in part, though the originals would certainly never recognize some of the imitations. Genee and Bessie McCoy ought to see Kokin to realize thoroughly how they don't appear.

Galetti's Simian Circus is a fair exhibition, though below the average of monkey shows. The act of John Birch, the man with the hats, is simply inexcusable. There is nothing clever in anything he does. On the contrary his act is inane without a redeeming feature. The Misses Weston provide a clever musical offering at the opening of the program and the moving pictures and orchestra complete the bill.

"THE HONOR OF THE FAMILY."

As Jean Jacques Rouget, Walter R. Seymour, who is starring at the Garrick this week in "The Honor of the Family"—though no announcement to that effect has been made by the manage-

ment—is giving one of the most finished performances ever seen in stock in this city, and is doing so without much assistance from the company surrounding him.

The play from the French of Balzac was first produced in this country by Otis Skinner, whose Colonel Bridau was a classic among the many presentations of swashbuckling heroes, which



MISS ROWENA STEWART

Who appears in the story of a Chorus Girl entitled "Broadway Love" at the Orpheum next week.

Skinner played better than anyone else after the death of the younger Salvini.

On the day following the Sunday performance at the Garrick, one of the critics remarked that "it would not be an empty compliment to say that had Mr. Durkin been in Otis Skinner's shoes when that admirable actor won fame in this same role, Mr. Durkin's name would probably shine with little less brilliancy than does that of his worthy predecessor." Wow! It is just as well that he didn't leave his shoes lying about. The comparison is manifestly unfair, for poor Skinner is not here to defend himself. James Durkin meets the requirements of such a part as that of Colonel Bridau in about the same convincing manner that Marie Dressler would play Juliet or George M. Cohan, Macbeth. It was a great opportunity for him, but he was sadly unequal to the task. Jan Wheatley as Flora Brazier gave a fairly good performance, as did Wilson Day as Borniche and David Herblin as Gilet. The others had little to do, and apparently it was just as well that they did, especially the men, for stuffed in their grotesque costumes they read their lines with much the same effect as the school boy's first effort with "The boy stood on the burning deck."

The production was badly staged and the costuming simply impossible, from the red flannels of Herblin, the blouse of which was evidently constructed for "Fat" Schuler, to the Colonial Dame effects exploited by the ladies.